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**HEISS, JOHN P. FAMILY PAPERS**  
**1835-1872**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The John P. Heiss Family Papers, 1835-1872, was a gift from Robert Lusk, the grandson of John P. Heiss. The collection consists of ca. 500 items and two volumes. The collection occupies .84 linear feet of shelf space. The collection has no restrictions.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

These papers are composed of correspondence, editorials, dispatches, legal documents, etc. John P. Heiss began his career as a newspaper man in charge of the financial department of the printing establishment of the Nashville *Union* under the editorship of Jeremiah George Harris in 1840. For two years beginning in 1842 he joined with Thomas Hogan as co-editor of the Nashville *Union* and at the same time was a Major in the Tennessee Militia. In 1845, he became business manager of Washington *Union*, the newly established organ of the Polk administration, joining with Thomas Ritchie of the Richmond *Enquirer*. This partnership ended in 1848, and from 1851-1855 Heiss was editor of the New Orleans *Delta*. William L. Marcy, Secretary of State, employed him to carry dispatches to Nicaragua where he became associated with William L. Walker. After becoming a citizen of Nicaragua he served as charge d'affaires in place of Father Vijil and was authorized to ratify on behalf of Nicaragua a treaty with the United States. Heiss continued his interest in Nicaragua and was appointed in 1860 as bearer of dispatches to the U.S. Legation. On his return to the Latin American country he served as an agent for Spanish-American and British bondholders. His chief concern, however, was the cultivation of cotton in Central America and he was very much interested in the development of the cotton gin. Numerous letters of David Hoadley, President of the Panama Railroad, are concerned with opportunities for capitalism in Latin America by means of cotton and hemp cultivation, development of transportation, building of steamers, construction of a canal railroads. Heiss was appointed by Great Britain and the United States as special commissioner to negotiate the "Mosquito Territory question." Some correspondence with William Walker deals with this question. There are 41 letters written by Heiss in the collection. The letters from James K. Polk deal primarily with political matters while Heiss was editor of the Nashville *Union*. Other correspondents in this collection, in addition to those already mentioned, includes Joseph Brenan, Lewis S. Coryell, J.R. Cox, George M. Dallas, John Travis, Daniel E. Delavan, Fermin Ferrer, Hugh Fraser, George Walker, and Henry A. Wise.

Two scrapbooks contain numerous clippings about Nicaragua. Some agreements, indentures and editorials make up the remainder of the collection.,

Papers published in Volume II, *Tennessee Historical Magazine*.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John P. Heiss married Ann Molineaux at Trinity Church in Philadelphia on September 15, 1835. In 1840, he became a resident of Nashville, Tennessee, and was in charge of the financial department of the printing establishment of the Nashville *Union*, then conducted by J. George Harris. From 1842 to 1844, Heiss was a Major in the Tennessee Militia and joined with Thomas Hogan as co-editor of the Nashville *Union*. From 1845 to 1848, Heiss became a business manager of the Washington *Union*, newly established organ of the Polk administration, with Thomas Ritchie of the Richmond Enquirer. This newspaper was established after the purchase of the Washington *Globe* by Ritchie and Heiss. In 1848, he retired from partnership but remained in Washington for some time. From 1851 to 1855, he was the Editor of the New Orleans Delta. From 1856-1857, Heiss was associated with William Walker and was employed by Marcy, Secretary of State, to carry dispatches to Nicaragua. He was left in charge d'affaires by Father Vijil to look out for interests of Nicaragua. He was authorized to ratify on behalf of Nicaragua a treaty with the United States. He was also authorized by the Walker Government as a citizen of Nicaragua and in close touch with Walker until the fall of 1857. In 1857, Heiss returned to Washington and established a newspaper called the *States*. In 1860, he retained his interest in Nicaragua and was appointed bearer of dispatches to U.S. legation, receiving his commission from William Henry Trescotts, acting Secretary of State of Tennessee. In 1861, Heiss returned to Nicaragua and his chief concern was cultivation of cotton in Central America. In, 1862, he served as an agent of Britain bondholders who had claims against Nicaragua. On August 22, 1865, Heiss died in New York (obituary) and was buried in Bristol, Pennsylvania.

From 1865 to 1872, Henry Weiss, son of John Weiss served in the Confederate Army and after the war became one of the editors of the *Republican Editor*. In 1872, Henry Weiss became the managing editor of the St. Louis *Times*. He returned to Nashville in 187 and became managing editor of the *Union and American* for about a year until it was consolidated with the *Republican Banner*. In 1872, he became the managing editor of the *American*. In 1876, Henry Heiss married Miss Mary Lusk of Nashville, Tennessee.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Box 1

1. Articles---“Heiss Papers”---*Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 331-345; II, 208-233
2. Articles of Agreement---Consul General of Nicaragua and Barclay House, 1865
3. Articles of Agreement---Heiss, John P. and Russell Fitzgerald, 1862
4. Articles of Agreement---Republican of Guatemala and Spanish American bondholders, 1856
5. Biographical sketch---Vijil, Don Augustus
6. Broadside---Challenge to Duel---Brenan, Joseph to E.J. Carrell, New Orleans, Louisiana, 185-
7. Certificate---Heiss, John P.---Niagara Falls, Canada, 1842
8. Certificate---Stock---Compania de Diligencias---Nicaragua, 1864
9. Certificate---Stock---New York Cemetery Company, 1851
10. Clippings---General
11. Clippings---Heiss, Henry
12. Commission---N.A. Chontates CO. to John P. Heiss, 1856
13. Commission---Walker, William to John P. Heiss, 1856
14. Commission---State of Louisiana to John P. Heiss, Delegate, Memphis Convention, 1853
15. Commission---U.S. State Department to John P. Heiss, 1856, 1860
16. Contract---Heiss, John P. and Sam Butterworth with R.L. Allen and Co., New York, 1856
17. Contract--- Ritchie and Heiss with J.A. Houston, New York, 1845
18. Epitaph---Nashville, Tennessee, 1840
19. Estate Papers---Heiss, Clarissa, Newport, Rhode Island, 1882
20. Extracts---Scrapbook
21. Genealogical data---Heiss family
22. Index---Letters, Notes, Newspaper clippings
23. Invitation---Democratic Party Dinner, New York, 1847
24. Invitation---Democratic Union and California Club Ball, New York, 1850
25. Land Record---Deed---Bondt, Ian, to G.D. Crommelin, Washington, D.C., 1843
26. Land Record---Warrant---Republic of Nicaragua to D.N. Ingraham, 1856
27. Land Record---Warrant---Republic of Nicaragua to Thomas Reilly, 1856
28. Marriage Certificated---Heiss, John P. to Anna Molineaux, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1835
29. Memorandum---Dissolution of Partnership, Ritchie and Heiss, 1848
30. Memorandum of Agreement---Ritchie and Heiss, 1849
31. Newspaper---*Gaceta de Nicaragua*, 1864
32. Newspaper article---by Alexander Walker
33. Newspaper article---“Col. Polk alias Peter Doodle”
34. Newspaper article---re: W.B. Lewis
35. Newspaper article---*The Globe* and *National Intelligencer*, 1845
36. Note---Committee of Spanish Bondholders

37. Note---Attack by J.P. Heiss on Cyril V. Gray
38. Notes---Central America
39. Notes---Transit Company and Canal Grant---Nicaragua
40. Receipt---Heiss, John P., 1864
41. Scrapbook---Nicaragua, ca. 1855-1857

**Box 2**

1. Correspondence---Author unknown---Coxe
2. Correspondence---Dallas-Donelson
3. Correspondence---Ferrer-Fraser
4. Correspondence---Gay-Heiss, Henry
5. Correspondence---Heiss, John P., 1840-1864
6. Correspondence---Heiss, John P., 1865
7. Correspondence---Hoadley, David
8. Correspondence---Jerez-Kirkwood
9. Correspondence---Lusk-Mathew
10. Correspondence---McManus-Nicholson
11. Correspondence---Perez-Folk
12. Correspondence---Powles, J.D.
13. Correspondence---Ritchie-Smith
14. Correspondence---Teledon-Tyson
15. Correspondence---Vijil-Wise

Scrapbook Separately Wrapped  
Scrapbook---Nicaragua, 1845-1859

## NAME INDEX

This is a name index of the correspondents in the John P. Heiss Family Papers, together with the dates of the letters and information regarding their contents. The figures in parentheses immediately following the name denote the number of letters if more than one. The last numbers listed refer to the box and folder in which the material is to be found. All letters are addressed to John P. Heiss unless otherwise noted.

- Author unknown, n.d., re: delivery of dispatches from Ambassador to U.S., 2-1  
Acklen, Ade to Mrs. Heiss, 1855, re: death of her children, 2-1  
Armstrong, R. to J.K. Paulding, Secretary of Navy, 1840, re: recommends appointment of Heiss, 2-1  
Bloesst, Emma (Heiss), 1849, re: Heiss family in Germany, 2-1  
Bowen, George M. (2) to Don Fernando Guzman and Spanish American bondholders, 1864, re: settlement of claim agent against Nicaraguan government, 2-1  
Brenan, Joseph (4), [1855], re: policies to be followed by the New Orleans *Delta*, 2-1  
Cameron, Smith, 1847, re: ownership of interest in *Union* office (Heiss letter on bottom) 2-1  
Cole, J.L., 1858, re: filibusters, etc. 2-1  
Conner, James: James C. Stovall, Elijah F. Purdy, 1846, re: copies of the President's speech, 2-1  
Coryell, Lewis S., 1847, re: purchase of paper in Washington, 2-1  
Coxe, J.R. (4), 1838-1842, re: costal steamboats and charge against S.W. Downing, 2-1  
Dallas, George M., 1856, re: British views of Nicaragua and Walker, 2-2  
Davis, Jefferson, 1859, re: gratifying allusions by the *Delta*, 2-2  
Davis, John (3), 1840, re: application to Navy Department and recommendation for Heiss, 2-2  
Delavan, Daniel E. (3), 1848, re: finances, 2-2  
Dickins, Asbury to Heiss and Ritchie, 1845, re: election as printers to the Senate, 2-2  
Dimitry, Alex, 1857, re: interesting reading, 2-2  
Dobbins, J.J. to S.P. Walker, 1865, re: requesting promotion for Lieutenant Heiss, 2-2  
Donelson, A.J. to J.K. Paulding, 1840, re: recommendation for Heiss, 2-2  
Ferrer, Fermin (6) to Heiss: Earl of Clarendon; William Walker, 1856, re: treaty with U.S., 2-3  
Fraser, Hugh (4), 1864-1865, re: British bondholders, 2-3  
Gay, William T. (1847), re: election to Society of Emory College, 2-4  
Gilbert, George W., 1863, re: shipment of machinery, 2-4  
Green, Thomas to Thos. Ritchie, 1846, re: installment payment to Blair and Rives, 2-4  
Grundy, James P. to J.K. Paulding, 1840, re: John P. Heiss application, 2-4  
Harding, William G., Brig. Gen., 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Tennessee Militia, 1842, re: court-martial, 2-4  
Harris, Jeremiah George to James K. Paulding, 1840, re: recommendation for Heiss, 2-4  
Hart, James L. (3), 1864, re: Spanish-American bonds, 2-4  
Heiss, Clara, 1849, (notes on letter by Emma [Heiss] Bloest), 2-1  
Heiss, Henry (4), to Army headquarters; to wife, Mary (Luski) Heiss, n.d. and 1865-1872, re: news for *American*; horse trade; family news, 2-4

Heiss, John P. (41), to various persons, 1841-1865, re: newspaper business; Nicaragua; cotton and hemp cultivation in Central America; William Walk, 2-5, 2-6

Hoadey, David (24), 1861-1865, re: cotton and hemp cultivation in Central America; opportunities for American and British capitalist in Nicaragua; coast wise steamers in Central American; railroads in Panama and Honduras; canal, 2-7

Jerez, Maximo, 1859, re: U.S.-Nicaraguan treaty; relations between two countries after Walker filibuster, 2-8

Johnson, Cave and others, U.S. House of Representatives to [James K. Paulding], 1840, re: recommendation for Heiss, 2-8

Kendall, W.G. (2), 1853, re: continuation of Judge [Alexander] Walker as editor of New Orleans *Delta*, 2-8

Kirkwood, J.T. (12) to James L. Hart and others, 1864, re: settlement with Spanish American bondholders, 2-8

Lusk, [Robert] to daughter, Mary (Lusk) Heiss, 1873, re: family news from Nashville, 2-9

McManus, W.B. 1869, re: bonds, 2-9

Maresheta, J. de, 1856, re: appointment, 2-9

Mathew, George B. (10) to Don Pedro Teledon and others, 1863-1864, re: appointment of Heiss as vice-consul for England in Nicaragua; bonds of Spanish American bondholders; abolition of British vice-consulate and removal of British legation with its archives to Costa Rica, 2-9

Miller, Samuel (2) to Mary (Lusk) Heiss and John P. Heiss; 1855, re: tea invitation; school expenses for Henry Heiss at West Jersey Collegiate School, 2-10

Montealeore, Managua (2), 1865, re: Spanish-American bonds, 2-10

Morgan, Charles, 1856, re: wishes Heiss to handle affairs of Nicaraguan government in Washington, D.C., 2-10

Nelson, W. (8), 1863-1865, re: fiber culture in Nicaragua, primarily hemp, 2-10

Nicholson, Alfred O.P. (2), 1844-1851, re: Texas annexation; Tennessee politics, Pillow and Scott, 2-10

Perez [Geronimo] (cabinet minister under Martinez), 1862, re: request from Nicaraguan Government to admit lamps and oil from U.S. duty free, 2-11

Pickett, John T., 1856, re: shooting of waiter at Willard Hotel, Washington, D.C. by William Herbert, 2-11

Polk, James Knox (14), 1840-1844, re: establishment of Democratic newspaper in Washington, D.C.; Tennessee and national politics; Aaron V. Brown and Samuel Laughlin; circulation of political pamphlets, 2-11

Powles, J.D. (5) to Martinez (President of Nicaragua) and John P. Heiss, 1863-1864, re: settlement of bondholders claims against Nicaragua, 2-12

Ritchie, Thomas (3), n.d. and 1852, re: newspaper business; payment by Heiss to Blair & Rives, 2-12

Rodgers, W.T., 1837, re: recommendation, 2-13

Shuff, Joseph B. (2), to Clarisse Richmond Heiss, 1867-1868, re: Henry Heiss and habits of a poor correspondent, 2-13

Smith, J.M. to J.K. Paulding, 1840, re: recommends John P. Heiss for Purser in U.S. Navy, 2-13

Speer, John H. (New York Parks Commission), 1865, re: acknowledgement of gift of two monkeys for Central Park, 2-13

Teledon, Pedro (3), 1864, re: bondholders, 2-14  
Trenholm, Joh H. (2) to Thomas Ritchie and John P. Heiss, 1848-1852, re: newspaper  
business; charges of Rives against Heiss, 2-14  
Trescot, William H., 1860, re: business of U.S. Secretary of State, 2-14  
Tyler, Robert, [1842], re: position of President Tyler on national bank, tariff and  
distributions, 2-14  
Tyson, M.L.H. to Clarissa (Richmond) Heiss, 1867, re: family affairs, 2-14  
Vijil, Augustin to William L. Macy, 1856, re: appointment of Heiss as deputy during  
absences of Vijil from U.S., 2-13  
Walker, William (89), 1856-1858, re: Nicaraguan government and filibustering attempt  
of Walker, 2-15  
Welch, A., 1849, re: busts of Washington and Franklin purchased fro Heiss, 2-15  
Wise, Henry A. (2), 1855, 1857, re: sale of New Orleans *Delta* and resignation of Heiss;  
approval of political affiliations of Heiss, 2-15